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Interest of a Nation:

THE TRUE

Interest of a Nation:

OR, THE

Duty of Magistrates, Ministers, and People,

In order to the further

Settlement and Prosperity

OF THESE

KINGDOMS.

WILLIAM D. M. A.
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OR, THE
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In order to the further
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OF THESE
KINGDOMS.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
Assizes held at *BUCKINGHAM*,
JULY the 5th, 1692.

By *JOHN HOWARD*, M. A.
Rector of *Marston-Trussel*, in *Northampton-shire*.

LONDON:
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22
The True
Interest of a Nation:

OF THE
Duty of Ministers, Missionaries, and People,

In order to the Union

SETTLEMENT AND PROSPERITY

OF THE

KINGDOMS

SERMON

Preached at the

Altars held at BUCKINGHAM

JULY the 4th 1802.

By JOHN THURGOOD, M. A.
Rector of Merton, in the County of Surrey.

LONDON:

Printed for J. Almon, at the Angel in the Passage, 1802.

The TRUE
Interest of a Nation:
OR, THE
Duty of Magistrates, Ministers, and People,
In order to the further
Settlement and Prosperity
OF THESE
KINGDOMS.

Prov. XIV. xxxiv.
*Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach
to any people.*

THERE is ordinarily so little either Wisdom or Generosity in most Men, that they are almost wholly taken up with their own private Interest or Pleasures, with a Neglect of the Publick Safety and Welfare of the Nation, for tho many enquire much after the State of it, whether to entertain their idle Moments, or gratifie their Curiosity, or be-
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cause in the general they wish well to it, or for other ends : yet few comparatively make it a main part of their Business to promote its Happiness. And even amongst these, how few are there that rightly understand the true Interest of the Nation, and seriously apply themselves to those Means that are necessary to advance it ! Now ~~what these are, King Solomon,~~ a Person in the highest Station, and of the greatest Wisdom amongst Men, (and therefore fittest to judge of the Interest of a Kingdom,) has told us from his own Wisdom and Experience, and which is more, from the Wisdom of God himself, including them in one comprehensive word in my Text, *Righteousness exalteth a nation.* And to assure us that in the want of this, no other Methods can be sufficient, he adds, *But sin is a reproach to any people.*

Here are therefore two plain Propositions that fully instruct us, the one what will make a Nation Happy ; and the other what will as certainly make it Miserable. If we have therefore a Subject of this moment before us, and wherein we are all nearly concern'd, I hope none will blame me, if I handle it with that Plainness and Freedom which the Consequence of the thing itself, the present State of the Nation, the Condition of the Times, and the Necessity of every one of Us here present do call for : therefore in speaking to these words, I shall endeavour to Explain and Confirm both the Propositions in their order, and then draw such Inferences from them as are most seasonable, bringing the Matter down to this Time, and the present Occasion of our meeting together.

I. *Righteousness exalteth a Nation* : In relation to which words I shall endeavour to shew you,

1. What is here meant by Righteousness.
2. How it exalts a Nation.

1. Righteousness in a strict sense is as much as Justice ; and it is often used in Scripture to signify Charity, particularly that branch of it which is exercised in supplying the
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Wants of poor indigent People: but in my Text it is to be understood in a greater Latitude, and is the same with Virtue or Goodness, or Obedience to God in the general; as appears in that it is set in Opposition to Sin (by which is meant all manner of Wickedness,) in the latter part of the Verse: And this sense of the Word is so ordinary in the Holy Scriptures, and so obvious to every one, as well as necessary to the wise Man's Purpose in this place, that I need not say any thing more in the proof of it. Therefore I proceed to shew,

2. How *Righteousness exalteth a Nation*: That is, raises it higher, in making it better, and causing it to abound with every thing that may be of real Advantage to it. But there are so many Respects and Instances wherein a Nation is advanced, and so many Branches of Righteousness, which conduce to it, that it would make too great a part of my Discourse to represent them all: therefore I shall only speak to the chief of them, as briefly as I can, but sufficiently, I hope, to satisfy all sober and unprejudiced Hearers.

Righteousness is the greatest Endowment that our best Faculties are capable of, and far more excellent than all earthly Benefits: For (as Solomon says of Wisdom, which is the same thing under another name, Prov. 3. 14, 15.) *the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire, are not to be compared unto her.* Yea, it raises us above the State of meer rational Beings, and renews us after the Image of GOD, and makes us Followers of him in a Divine Conversation. If a Nation therefore be advanced by a Plenty of Corn and Wine, by the Health, and Strength, and Numbers of the People, or by Foreign Rarities for Delight and Ornament: how much more then by the true Riches of the Heavenly Canaan, that Righteousness which comes down from thence, and at once ennobles the Souls and adorns the Conversation of them that have it?

But that I may speak more sensibly to those Men who perhaps may receive this rather as a fine Speculation, then a real Truth; I shall endeavour to demonstrate that Righteousness produces all those Effects to a Nation which in the general Opinion of Men do exalt it, as Health and Strength, Riches, Honour, Friendship, Security, Delight, and Comfort, &c. and that both as a Natural and a Moral Cause of them.

1. It is a natural Cause of these Benefits, to which nothing can conduce so much as that honest and regular way of living which true Religion requires: We do not only avoid the Causes of Bodily Distempers and Weaknesses, but much improve also in Health and Strength by many Habits of Righteousness, as Meekness, Patience, and Contentation, but especially Temperance in both the Branches of it, Sobriety and Chastity, and Diligence also in some honest Calling that is suitable to us. I hope I need not say how much the Vices contrary to these impair the best Natural Constitution, bring many Diseases upon the Body, and surprize Men with an untimely Death; since it has been observ'd, and not without rational Evidence, that Gluttony itself kills more then the Sword. And as for Riches, the very same Vertues that improve us in Health and Strength, do thereby fit us to use the most proper means of increasing in them also, which seldom fail of attaining their end; for the diligent hand maketh rich, *Prov. 10. 4.* Whereas *the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags, Prov. 23. 21.* Industry makes the Earth and the Waters profitable to us, and fetches home the Fruits and Treasures of the remotest Countries, to supply what may be wanting in our own: For though God in much Wisdom and Goodness, hath so suitably dispensed his Blessings to the several Parts of the World, that they ordinarily afford the most convenient Food, Physick, and Clothing to the Inhabitants; yet he doth not so equally proportion these, but that it is often necessary that the Plenty of some should supply the
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Scarcity of others. And there is in every one something peculiar, that serveth, if not the Necessity, yet the Convenience and Delight of other Countries; that Nations might be sensible of a mutual Dependance on one another, to encourage Amity between them, and to excite their Industry, by which each of them may, even from all Parts of the Earth, enrich their own Country. What shall we say of that Honour with which Righteousness exalts a Nation? There is certainly nothing can gain it so great a Reputation in the World as this: It adds such a Lustre to all that are endow'd with it, as makes them venerable in the eyes of others: For it is from hence that Men are deliberate in their Counsels, grave in their Deportment, faithful in their Dealings, just to their Promises, compassionate to the Miserable, humble and obliging to all Persons. And these Vertues do naturally gain a Reputation to those that have them: therefore *Moses* speaking of God's Commands, exhorts *Israel* to keep and do them, from this Motive, That it would be their Wisdom and Understanding in the sight of the Nations, who on this account would say, *Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people*, Deut. 4. 6.

Now the same Vertues that get Honour and Reputation to a People, do also allure the Affections of other Nations, and cause them to enter into Affinities and Leagues with them: And indeed what Prince or People would not promise themselves great Advantages from such an Alliance? They who are observ'd to practice Righteousness in all their Relations at home, will never be suspected of Unfaithfulness towards their Allies abroad; and the more they are improved by a regular and industrious way of living, the better are they fitted to serve the ends of such an Union. And then a further Effect of these Things will be the greater Security of a Nation so endowed with Righteousness, and strengthened with Alliances on the account of it: besides, those good Habits and Exercises which naturally improve Health and Strength (as

I shew'd before) do also fit Men for the Defence of their Country, when any Attempts are made upon it by their Enemies. And a Love and good Will to our Neighbours, and a Zeal for the Publick Good, as they prevent Civil Breaches and Contentions in a People among themselves, so they mightily unite and strengthen them against a foreign Enemy; especially when they are animated also by that true Courage which is another Branch of Righteousness. To these I shall add, as the Result of them all, as well as an immediate Effect of Righteousness, that inward Peace and Satisfaction, that sweet Delight and Comfort which a Nation fearing God, and working Righteousness are sure to enjoy: for this arises from the very Nature of Vertue, which consists in a Rectitude that must needs be very agreeable to a Mind disposed for it; and it is also one of its main Offices to govern those Passions that interrupt our inward Peace, and direct them to such Objects as afford a pleasing Conversation to us. And there is no small addition to these Comforts from a Conscience of those Habits, together with a due Exercise of them in a virtuous Life; and something also (as was before hinted) from the several outward Advantages with which Righteousness does exalt a Nation; which are summ'd up by *Solomon* in a few words, that attest all I have mentioned under this Head, *Prov.* 3. 16, 17. where speaking of Wisdom, he says, *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour: Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.*

2. Righteousness exalts a Nation in procuring such Benefits to it as a Moral Cause, in that it qualifies them to receive these more abundantly by the Blessing of Almighty God, as the Answer of their Prayers, and a Reward of their Righteousness, according to the many Promises he has given us, both in the Old and New Testament. The Lord often assures his *Israel*, and in them all other Nations, that if they would be obedient to his Laws, they should be blessed in all their

their Temporal Concerns, but most fully and particularly, *Lev. 26. Deut. 28.* Our Saviour has also assur'd us of Temporal Blessings upon Condition we first seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, *Math. 6. 33.* And St. Paul tells us, That *godliness is profitable to all things*, *1 Tim. 4. 8.* It is evident then, if a Nation be righteous, the Lord who loves Righteousness will be with them, to give them all those Blessings which will make them the Admiration as well as the Envy and Dread of other Nations, who will have just reason to confess, That *happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord*, *Psal. 144. 15.* I come now to the latter part of my Text:

II. *Sin is a reproach to any people.*

Though these words are interpreted with some little difference by learned Men, yet our Translation agrees well enough with the Original, and is authoris'd also by the *Chaldee* Paraphrase: and whereas the *Septuagint* and other learned Versions render it, *But sins do diminish the Tribes, or People, or Nations*; and the *Vulgar Latine*, *That sin makes the People miserable*. All this gives us a further Confirmation of the same Sence in different Terms; and therefore we may without doing Violence to the Text, or perverting the wise Man's Intention in this place, put them all together, and so they will stand in a more plain and full Opposition to the former part of the Verse: And if I shall prove to you, That *sin is a reproach to a people*, both immediately in itself, and remotely in its Effects; this will take in all the Differences of the several Versions and Interpretations of the Words:

1. It is so immediately and in itself: If it be a Shame for an intelligent Being to act below his Understanding, and subject his noblest Faculties to the will of his sensual Appetite; then Sin is a Shame and a Reproach to us: Can a Prince without Dishonour submit himself to the meanest of his Subjects, or the Master become a Slave to his Servant? No

more:

more can the Soul of Man without the greatest Diminution to its Worth and Dignity, stoop to the vile Servitude of Carnal Affections. If to choose a little base Profit, or Delight, or Reputation, and Friendship with the worst of Men, for a few Moments, as if it were their only Felicity, and thereby venture the loss of true and Eternal Happiness, which after a short and uncertain time they might otherwise enjoy, be a Reproach to them who are capable of considering both the one and the other, who confess they have immortal Souls, and cannot deny but they expose them to great Dangers by this means, and have also rational Grounds of Belief, that a Course of Piety would afford them greater Delight and Satisfaction even in this Life: (for the very Heathens could acknowledge, that Vertue is a Reward to itself, and even with the meanest and most miserable Condition, is preferable to all outward Advantages without it :) Then if there be any such thing as Folly in the World, there must lie a just Imputation of it on such Persons as thus court their own Misery, and despise their Happiness. Therefore it is no wonder, that *Solomon* does ordinarily in this Book of *Proverbs* call wicked Men Fools; and yet what greater Contempt can he cast upon them then this? Forasmuch as Wisdom raises Mens Reputation, and makes them Honourable, so much does Folly render them Mean and Despicable in the World. And does not Sin do the same thing also? If we speak of the sense which all Persons that retain any love for Vertue have of it, the matter is without question. If a Man has the Reputation of a Drunkard, a Whoremonger, or a covetous Person; if he be accounted Proud, Deceitful, or Malicious; if he be given to Lying, Prophaneness, or Unseemly Communication, &c. how extremely does this lessen him in the Esteem of all good Men? Yea, if he has never so excellent Gifts of Nature and Fortune, (as they are call'd) if he is possess'd of a good Estate, if he has the best Accomplishments of Body; and the greatest natural and acquir'd Endowments of Soul, as
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Judgment, Wit, Learning, Arts, &c. all these are so diminished by some ill Habits in his Conversation, that he loses, for the most part, the Credit of them. Nay, to go further yet, if to all these Advantages there be added many Moral Qualifications too; if a Person be of a free and generous Mind, an humble Carriage, a compassionate Temper, and yet lives in the Sin of Drunkenness, or Uncleaness, or if he appears never so exactly chaste and sober, but at the same time is known to be covetous and oppressing, these base Vices do more undermine and betray his Reputation, then all other Vertues can contribute to it. And they do this not only in the Opinion of honest and innocent Men, but of those also, in a great measure, who are guilty of as bad, if not the same Faults themselves; for it is usual with most Men to censure and despise those very Sins in their Neighbours, which they indulge in their own Persons: as if they thought a greater Liberty is allow'd to them then to others; or else, because they consider their own Faults with the most extenuating Circumstances, while they look upon other Mens with the greatest Aggravations. So that if it should be put to a general Vote, whether Sin be not a Reproach and Dishonour to any People, they would so universally agree in the Affirmative, that very few would be found to make any Exception, unless it were for one single Person? But what reserve soever any may have out of Partiality to their own Persons, in relation to this matter; yet the Judgment they pass upon all others would be a concluding Sentence against themselves.

1. Sin is a Reproach to any People in its Effects also: That many Sins do naturally tend to the making Men miserable in the World, is so evident, that I need not spend time in proving it; especially since I have given you already some Hints of it in speaking to the former part of my Text. The Sins of Pride, Luxury, Intemperance, and Strife are very great Wasters, and have ruined many thousands in their Estates, and some of them many more in their Health and Strength:

The former of these Cases does too ordinarily expose Men to Contempt, even when it comes by the hand of Providence. But when Poverty is the natural Effect of Mens Sins, it becomes justly a Reproach to them : And so are these Pains and Diseases also, and whatsoever other Calamities Men bring upon themselves by a vicious Life. And to these God is pleased, many times to add others, also upon obstinate Sinners, to vindicate his Justice and Holiness in the World, especially when the Sins become National, and Judgment is not executed upon them as it ought, by his Vice-gerents. And when ever these come upon a People, they bring a great Reproach with them ; according to that Threatning sent by the Prophet *Jeremiah* to the Remnant left at *Jerusalem* in the time of the *Babylonish* Captivity, *Jer.* 29. 18. *I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach among all the nations whither I have driven them.* And indeed in such cases there is no less then a threefold Reproach lies upon a Nation. Judgment is a Work which God uses as the last Remedy, when all other Methods fail of accomplishing his gracious Purposes upon a People. And it is usually a great while, after much Waiting and Forbearance, e're he comes to this Extremity : whensoever therefore any of his Judgments are inflicted upon Sinners, they are so many Reproaches from him for their great Impieties, most ungratefully continued in notwithstanding all the effects of his Love and Mercy, by which he would have led them to Repentance, and obstinately retain'd against all the Patience he had long exercised towards them, and the many Threatnings of Judgment he had given them both in his Word and Providences, to draw them to it. And God in his Wisdom does usually send such Judgments upon a People as are most suitable to their Sins, that they may be more visible Reproaches to them : As when he punishes a divided and contentious Nation with open Wars, a
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luxurious People with Hunger and Nakedness, or the Lascivious that burn in their Lusts, with the destroying Heats of a Plague, or devouring Fires in their Towns and Cities. Of all which Cases, and several others, it would be easie to give many Instances. 2. There is a Reproach also in such cases from the World, (as was shew'd before,) because of that Misery a People is involv'd in by reason of these Judgments. 3. And if they themselves have any sence, they must needs be reproach'd too by their own Consciences, that they have dealt so unworthily with their God, so treacherously with their own Souls, and so foolishly undermin'd also their present Happiness: And then they may well (with *Ephraim*) be asham'd and confounded when they thus bear their Reproach, *Jer. 31. 19.*

You have now heard how Sin is a Reproach to any People, both in itself and its Effects: So that if some read the words, it diminishes or makes them miserable; this comes all to the same thing, because in these Effects it is a Reproach to a People, as well as in itself.

Now what has been said upon both the parts of my Text, might abundantly confirm to you from God's dealing with Men in all Ages: And indeed it would be hard to find a Nation that has not been an Instance of the truth of it. God has at all times blessed a People, and made them prosperous so long as they continued faithful to him in those main Duties of Piety, Justice, and Temperance, as they are taught by the Law of Nature, where they had no better a Light to guide them: and on the contrary, when they degenerated from these Vertues, and sunk into a State of Impiety, Idleness, and Luxury, they have been conquer'd and ruin'd by a more sober and virtuous Nation, whom God had rais'd up to execute his Vengeance upon them. This has been so common a case in the World, that whosoever looks into History, will easily see that from these Causes have been all the great Revolutions of Empires and Kingdoms, even to this day. But I shall

[12]

content myself with instancing particularly in the Case of the *Jews*, whose History deserves the greatest Regard from us; not only as it is very remarkable in itself, but in that it is convey'd to us in Records of unquestionable Authority; we see therefore in the sacred History of that Nation, while they serv'd God in the days of *Joshua*, and of the Elders that outliv'd him, they were blessed, with constant Victories over their Enemies, and enjoy'd the Fruits and Delights of a most fertile Country: But when after this they fell from the Service of God, he gave them up to serve their Enemies that cruelly oppress'd them. And tho' he still deliver'd them upon their Repentance, yet as often as they revolted from him again, he reduc'd them to the same Misery; so that they endur'd many a long and severe Bondage under several neighbouring Princes and People, as we read in the Book of *Judges*. And afterwards, so long as they were any thing mindful of their Duty to God, and obey'd his Laws, he blessed them more then any People; their Tribes were multiplied to a Miracle, and tho' the Land of their Residence was very small, and unfit, one would think, to sustain so great a Multitude, yet they abounded continually with all manner of Provisions, notwithstanding every seventh Year they received not any Fruits from the Earth: And God inspir'd them with such Courage, and gave them such Successes in their Wars, that they became a Terrour to all Nations about them. But when they forgot God their Saviour, who had done such great things for them, and fell into the practice of many foul Sins, they receiv'd from his hand one heavy Judgment after another, and several times became a Prey to their Enemies, who led them into Captivity, first one part and then another; and at length, when to all their former Sins they had added the Crucifying of the *Lord of Life*, and Persecuting his Disciples, they were soon destroyed from being a Nation, and those small Remains that survived so great a Slaughter as was every-where made of them by the *Romans*, were scatter'd into many

many remote Parts of the World, and are every-where a By-word and a Reproach unto this day. All which fell out exactly according to what God had in many Ages foretold them by his Prophets, and at last by our Blessed Saviour; and is also related by *Josephus* in his excellent History, who to the Story of that People in the Scriptures, has added a full and exact Account of their final Destruction, which in those sacred Writings was only foretold.

I proceed now to draw such Inferences from these Words as are most necessary, which in the general are but two; the former relating to the latter part of my Text, and the other to both, under which I shall speak to several particulars:

1. If Sin be a Reproach to any People, then especially to such as have been best inform'd of their Duty, and receiv'd the greatest Motives to be Righteous: Now of all Nations in the World, God has most abounded to us in both these Advantages: The Gospel is most plainly and fully preached among us, and besides the Holy Scriptures, which are everywhere to be read in our own Language, there so many excellent Practical Discourses for the explaining and applying those Sacred Oracles, that none who can either read or hear can pretend Ignorance of their Duty. And as to our Motives to be Righteous, (to say nothing of the natural Advantages of our Country which are very great.) I must put you in mind of the great Deliverance of this Nation from the Darknes and Oppressions of Popery, and from all the Attempts made to bring it back upon us for above Eighty Years together, with a constant Peace within our Borders, and a Prosperity that was envied by our Neighbours during all that time. But when this would not make us fear God, and love one another, as became good Christians, our private Animosities were punished with a most Unnatural Intestine War, and many Miseries that attended and follow'd it: And when, after many Years, God had restored us to a flourishing State, and oblig'd us by new Favours to be faithful to him; seeing these
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[14]

had not those good Effects upon us as might be expected, he visited us with a dreadful Plague that very much depopulated the chief City of our Nation, and destroyed many thousands in other places; and soon after it, with a devouring Fire that laid the Glory of that City in Ashes, together with so many other Fires in the Kingdom within a few Years, as perhaps had not been seen any where before in a time of Peace. And about the same time God suffer'd us to be drawn into a War once and again, that was never like to be much for our Credit or Advantage. And during that Reign especially, Men were given up to so strange an Insatiation as to suffer themselves to be exasperated one against another upon very small Grounds, by the treacherous Insinuations of such Men as knew well enough what Advantages to expect from our Divisions: But yet the Lord did not bring upon us the Desert of those Sins, nor deliver us into the Hands of those cruel Men that were for dividing us only that they might destroy us; but their Plots and Designs against us were discover'd, and prevented from time to time; and tho' they gather'd Strength and Interest notwithstanding, thro' the Enakness of some amongst us, and the Impotency of others, till at last they seem'd to have Power enough in their Hands to do their Business by open Force, and we saw ourselves with all our dearest Interests at the Brink of Ruine; and which might strike coldest to us of any thing, we could see nothing in all this, but the Natural, or at least the Moral Effects of our own Doings; yet even at this time, when our Enemies were so confident of finishing their Work, and we had even given up ourselves for lost, as Men without Hope; our gracious God would not give us up too, tho' we had so much provoked him: As if he had the same Relentings for us, as for *Israel* of old, when he thus speaks by his Prophet *Hosea*, *How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together,*

gather, Hof. 11. 8. And, blessed be his Name! we soon found the gracious Effects of such a Compassion, and by those many Wonders of Providence which made our late happy Revolution, and the great Successes God has since given us, we find ourselves a free People, in the Enjoyment of our Properties and Religion, under the best temper'd Government in the World. And tho' the neighbouring Nations engaged in the same Cause with us, have endur'd all the dreadful Miseries of War, yet we have felt nothing of it (in the general) but the Payment of Taxes towards it; which no good Man will grudge at, that knows they are the Price of our Estates, our Liberties, our Lives; and which is more than all our Religion. *Now after all, that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, (as Ezra speaks) seeing that our God hath punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and has given us such a Deliverance as this, should we again break his Commandments, would he not be angry with us till he had consum'd us, so that there should be no Remnant nor Escaping?* You see therefore what Motives we have to depart from Sin, and embrace Righteousness. God has continually enrich'd us with his Mercies; he has exercis'd great Patience towards us, and wrought many wonderful Deliverances for us, notwithstanding our heinous Sins and Rebellions against him; he has also executed some Judgments upon us, and threatned us with more and greater yet, if we do not return to him: Yea, we have Motives from our very Sins; for is it not yet enough that we have transgress'd the Laws of our God, and rebell'd against him? Hath the Lord often repented of the Evil he threatned us with? And shall not we yet repent of our evil Temper and Practices against him? Certainly it is high time, after so long a Defection, to return to ourselves, and to our God. And does not the present State of our Affairs ^{too} loudly ~~ask~~ for it? God still gives us Victories, but yet the finishing part of our Happiness is kept in suspense, which upon a sincere Reformation of our Lives, we may hope for: but if we come short of this, we shall not only

ly (in all likelihood) prevent such a Blessing, but lose the Advantages he has already given us, and become a Prey to the Malice and Fury of the worst Men in the World: And would not this be an indelible Reproach to such a People as we are, that of all Nations in the World should best understand our Duty to God, and have more Obligations to do it than any others?

2. From both the parts of my Text we see how much it lies upon us to depart from Sin, and to do Righteousness: And that I may use the fittest way to perswade you to it, I shall,

1. Apply myself particularly to several Ranks and Orders of Men in the Nation, of which some are here present.

2. Speak to all in general.

3. Conclude with what concerns the Business of this time, and the present Occasion of our meeting together.

1. I shall apply myself particularly to several Ranks and Orders of Men in the Nation, namely, Magistrates, Ministers, and Gentlemen.

1. I shall with all that Humility and Respect that becomes me, address myself to Magistrates, whether in an higher or a lower Station, and desire you would be pleas'd to consider how much the Honour of your Places, the Trust reposed in you by Almighty God, and the Princes he has set over us, and the just Expectations of all good Men do require that ye should be Righteous, both in your Persons and in your Office. When *Jethro* advis'd *Moses* to chuse Magistrates under him, to assist him in Judging the People, he mentions the necessary Qualifications of such Men, *Exod. 18. 21. Able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness*. And when *Moses* speaks to the People about this Matter, a little before his Death, *Deut. 1. 13.* he gives another part of the Character of these Persons, namely, *Wise men and understanding, and known among the tribes.*

Magistrates therefore ought to be wise Men, whose Capacity

city and Knowledge is above the common Rate, who having furnished their Minds with the best Rules and Notions, are able to penetrate doubtful and difficult Causes, and discover Wickedness under all those Disguises by which it is shelter'd from common Observation: And to this Wisdom must be added Understanding too, that is, Prudence, (in the sence of the Original) not such as would direct them to consult their own Safety, rather than execute Justice when their Persons or Estates may be in danger by it, (for this is a base Craft that undermines and betrays a Nation, and therefore deserves not the name of Prudence) but that which enables Magistrates to judge of particular Cases with relation to Times, Persons, &c. and to do every part of their Duty with such necessary Precautions as may best serve the ends of it. Then they must be able Men, that is vertuous, (in the Original) or more particularly Men of Valour and Courage, which is always necessary to a Magistrate, *That he may break the jaws of the Wicked, (as Job speaks Chap. 29. 17.) and pluck the spoil out of his teeth:* That is, deliver them that suffer under the cruel Oppressor, how powerful soever, and execute Judgment on the proudest and most prosperous Offendor. To this must be added the Fear of God, which is to direct and govern them in all their Actions, wherein they are to have respect rather to God than Man, and to his Will and Honour, then to any Temporal Considerations. And then they will be Men of Truth too, that is of Justice, (as in the Septuagint Version) for Truth is a branch of Justice, and this, in every part, has so near a Resemblance to Truth, that it may well enough be call'd by that name. To this is added hating Covetousness, (which indeed the former parts of the Character do necessarily infer,) and without this it is hard to imagine how they should have either Justice or Courage enough to do their Duty in any tolerable measure, and to be sure the Fear of God would be far from them: the very name of covetousness is so provoking to one that has any sparks of Generosity, that it is hard for him to mention it without the sharpest Invectives: He that can stoop to such a

Lust as this, is not fit to be trusted with any Business of moment, for his Soul is not capable of those noble Thoughts and Resolutions that make Men honest and faithful to their Trust; and that greater Affection he bears to his little Deities, will easily bring him off from the weaker Ties of Friendship or Loyalty; so that whenever there shall arise a Competition between them, his nearest Friends, his Prince, and his Country, must become a Sacrifice to his private Interest. He therefore that loves himself at that rate, as to be an Enemy to Mankind, is very unfit to be a Magistrate; for every little prospect of Gain will pervert his Judgment, and make him overthrow the Cause he should maintain. To conclude the Character, Magistrates should be known among the People: Not such (ordinarily) as have liv'd in Obscurity, (tho' some of them may be excellent Persons too,) but Men that have more appear'd in the World, because such as they have liv'd in the Observation of publick Business, and are therefore fitter for it. This is requisite also for the greater Assurance of their Vertues, and the fuller Satisfaction of those that come to them for Justice, who will the more readily acquiesce in their Determinations. Every Magistrate therefore is to be a Person of Wisdom and Prudence, of Vertue and Courage, one that fears God, a Man of Truth, hating Covetousness, and that is known among the People. Hoping therefore that I speak to Men of these Qualifications, with such other particular Vertues as are consequent to the Fear of God, I do, with the greater Encouragement, beseech you to execute Righteousness, with all that Wisdom, Courage, and Zeal which is necessary, (especially at such a time as this) according to the Will of God, and the wholesome Laws of the Nation: You are both the Eyes and Hands of our dread Sovereigns, to find out and punish Transgressors; and which is more, ye are the Deputies of God himself, (and therefore call'd Gods in the Holy Scriptures, *Psal* 82.1,6.) and in his place and stead are to execute Judgment upon Earth: Which is necessary not only for the Discharge of a good Conscience in yourselves, and the suppressing

sing of such Sins as are naturally injurious to the Nation, but also to prevent God's Judgments upon it; for he is not wont to punish a People himself, till Sins that are committed by some are conniv'd at by others, and the hand of the Magistrate is slack in doing Justice upon the Guilty; For what is said of Murder *Numb. 35. 33. The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it;* is a Rule to us also in respect of other Sins, according to their several Aggravations, and the Punishments due to them. The Land contracts Guilt and Defilement from all heinous and open Sins of particular Persons, if they are not duly punish'd by those that are authorized to do it: And because a Nation, as such, cannot receive Punishment in another World, God will, sooner or later, visit them with his Judgments in this: and nothing can prevent him, but a seasonable Distribution of Justice by his Vice-gerents, and a Reformation among the People. When *Judah* were guilty of many Sins, that were too generally allow'd amongst them, such as Idolatry, Fornication, Adultery, Deccit, &c. with a Remission of Justice also, (as might well be suppos'd in so general a Corruption among the People,) and God threatned them no less then three times by the Prophet *Jeremiah* in these emphatical words, *Shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord? And shall not my soul be aveng'd on such a nation as this?* As if he challeng'd the whole World to object against the necessity of it: Yet he promises at the same time, if there could be found a Man in *Jerusalem* that executed Judgment, he would pardon it, *Jer. 5. 1.* Yea, when the Wrath of God has already exerted itself upon a People, this will put a stop to the Effects of it. Thus when *Israel* for their Idolatry, and Whoredom's with the Daughters of *Moab*, had a Plague sent among them, which together with some that were slain with the Sword, destroyed twenty four thousands of the People; and the brave and heroick *Phineas* seeing a great Man of the *Israelites* bring the Daughter of a *Midianitish* Prince to his Tent, in the face of the Congregation, that were now weeping for their Sins.

and the Anger of God that was broken out upon them, took a Javelin in his hand, and slew them both together in the Act of Sin: Immediately upon this Execution, the Plague was staid, and God so pleas'd with *Phineas* for it, that he gave unto him the Covenant of an Everlasting Priesthood, and caus'd this to be register'd to his Honour in all after Ages, *Num.* 25. He was indeed possess'd of a great Zeal for God, that made him despise the Dangers he incur'd by this worthy Act, which would certainly procure him very powerful Enemies. But God does usually protect his Servants in doing his own Work, and preserve them afterwards, notwithstanding all the efforts of Malice and Revenge against them: Now tho' *Phineas* was no Magistrate, yet at this time he did the part of one, and by an extraordinary Commission; he is therefore a great Example to such, so far as they can imitate him in a regular way. But when they forbear to do it, God will take the matter into his own hand, and vindicate his Justice by some terrible Effects of it upon a Nation: Therefore when the Psalmist complains that the Gods upon Earth would not do Justice, he calls upon the God of Heaven to judge the Earth, *Psal.* 82. 2, 8. But that the Prophets and righteous Men in this Nation may not have cause to do so too by your Default, I do again renew my humble Request to you, that you would endeavour to exalt the Nation by such an Execution of Righteousness as is requir'd of you: And for your farther Encouragement in this matter, be pleas'd to consider that God has done his part for us, in a most gracious manner, in delivering us from the hand of our Enemies, when we saw ourselves very near Destruction; and ever since has gone on to perfect our Deliverance. The Princes whom God in much Mercy has set over us, have done their parts too, not only in setting us such Examples of Righteousness as are very rare in the World, especially in so eminent a Station; but in publishing strict Proclamations for the Punishment of Vice, in requiring Ministers to preach earnestly against it, and read those Statutes to their People that were made for the suppressing of it,

it, and in giving a particular Charge to Magistrates under them; to execute the Laws upon Offenders. The faithful Servants of God in the Nation of all Ranks, have, in a great measure done their parts also, in sincere Humiliations for the Sins of the Nation, and praying to Almighty God to reform us, and avert his Judgments from us; and in order to it, to inspire Magistrates with those generous and holy Resolutions which are necessary to accomplish so great a Work: And I cannot but say you have such an Opportunity before you of carrying on a great Reformation in the Kingdom, as both the present and future Ages will for ever praise God for, so long as there shall be any Piety in the World, and will raise to yourselves a lasting Monument of Honour, if you zealously embrace it.

2. I shall in the next place apply myself to Ministers, and humbly recommend to their Consideration the present State of the Church of Christ among us; my Brethren, the Souls of the Nation are committed to our Charge; and tho' the Credit of the Ministry is grown so low, (thro' the Iniquity of the Times, and the unhappy Divisions that have been in the Kingdom,) that we have not so great an Advantage, as Ministers generally have in other Nations, to persuade People to be Religious, either by our Lives or Exhortations; yet if a general Care were taken among us to do what we can, it would certainly produce considerable Effects in reforming our People. And what so glorious a Work can we ever be employ'd in, as a sincere and constant Endeavour to win Souls to God, and exalt the Nation in that Righteousness which will exalt it in all other respects? We have often had Debates amongst ourselves, and with Ministers of other Churches about the uniting all good Protestants among us into one National Church: a Blessing which one would think a good Christian, should not only part with a few indifferent things in the outward Constitution of a Church, but with his own Blood also to purchase, if that would do it. The Atheism, Prophaneness, Envy, Strife, Hatred, and other horrid Sins that are very much occasion'd and shelter'd by our Divisions, should provoke the Zeal of all good Men in every Party to offer what they

they can towards an Union: But this is chiefly the Concern of Ministers; and as our Superiours appear well dispos'd to so good a Work, I desire we may contribute what is in our Power also towards it: And if I mistake not, there is a means to be used by us, which will mightily facilitate the matter, and do it more to the Advantage of our Church, then any thing that has been ordinarily propos'd, and that is a sincere Reformation of our own Lives, and a zealous Discharge of our Ministry; I speak not this as a Reproach to any, (for I heartily bless God for many holy, learned, and able Ministers that are amongst us,) but because we might still be much better, and if we would all seriously endeavour it; this would speak more loudly and effectually for us then the most learned Books that have been written in our Cause, and cast such a Lustre upon the Church, as would attract the Affections of the best Men in every Party, and cause them, upon reasonable Terms, to Unite with us. And in the use of other good Means, let us not cease to pray that God would give us the Blessing of good Success in so glorious a Work.

3. Having now spoken to publick Persons, both Magistrates and Ministers, I shall next address to the Gentry, and together with them all Persons of Interest and Estates in what Rank or Order soever: And you are so great a part of the Nation, and have such a commanding Influence on all below you, that one would think a general Consent, and Endeavour among you would turn almost the whole Nation which way you please: And indeed there is hardly any Corner of the Kingdom but looks like an Earnest of it; for where-ever Religion is zealously practis'd and countenanc'd by the Gentry, we see such Effects of it upon others, that almost every one in that Parish or Neighbourhood is a good Christian, or would seem to be so. But on the contrary, where Loosness or Irreligion is seen in any of that Rank, how strangely does it corrupt the Minds and Practices of their Inferiours! If your Power therefore be so great with others, you can never use it so well as in promoting Righteousness: for this is to do God and your Country the greatest Service, and get
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your selves a lasting Name and Honour in the World.

The very Heathens of old had so great an Affection for their Country, that they accounted it a brave and desirable thing to die for it, when a fit Occasion was offer'd: And your Ancestors have on all occasions signaliz'd themselves by hazarding their Lives in the same Cause; and I believe many amongst you would willingly have done so, in the War we are now engag'd in, against a potent Enemy: but perhaps your Presence at Home, for good reasons, was thought necessary: However, without detracting any thing from our Commanders and Armies abroad, whose Valour and Conduct deserve very great Praise, I may affirm, you have as glorious a part to act in order to our Victories as they. (yea, I would say more, if I did not consider many of them as righteous and devout Christians as well as Soldiers,) and that is, to reform your Persons and Families, so far as this is wanting, and encourage Righteousness amongst your Neighbours. This would prevail with God still to fight our Battels, and bless us with Victories and Triumphs till all our Enemies should be subdued under us. And I pray consider how much God expects this from you: Can any be so gross as to think, that he is born to a larger Estate, a better Education, and a greater Power and Interest in his Country, for no higher end then to live as he pleases? The very Law of Nature would teach us (if the Scriptures were silent,) that our Persons, our Estates, and whatever other Advantages we have are God's, and are therefore to be employ'd in his Service. And by consequence, the more any has receiv'd from God, the greater Returns of Piety and Obedience he is to make to him, (as our Saviour also has plainly told us, *Luke 12. 48.*) And this does much aggravate all the Sins of such Men, and make them more heinous then those of meaner Persons: And I cannot but add farther, That the Generosity which seems natural to Men of your Rank, should make you grateful to God for his Mercies, and zealous in his Service. If you receive a Kindness from any Man, you think it a mean and unworthy thing not to make a proportionable Return to him, or at least do what you can towards it:

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How much more then should you consider the Author of your Beings, and of all your Blessings, to return all possible Acknowledgements of his Goodness to so great a Benefactor? Now if any think it would expose them to many malicious Censures, Reproaches, and Oppositions, to attempt a Reformation of Mens Manners, in an Age wherein Sin so much abounds, in all Orders of Men; these little Discouragements are not to be regarded, when the Honour of God, the Good of the Country, and the Eternal Happiness of your own Souls are so much concern'd: It is a small matter to bear the Contradictions of ill Men, while we have the Applauses of all that are good, and, which is a thousand times more, the Favour of God himself, with true Peace and Satisfaction in our own Consciences. And indeed the greater Difficulties any Man meets with in the way of his Duty, the more it recommends his Piety, Courage, and Holy Resolution in doing it: To dare to practice Righteousness and encourage it in a licentious Age, when too many live as if they were born only for Ease and Luxury, is indeed to undergo a lesser Martyrdom, and to stand at least in the place of a Confessor. But this should rather provoke the Emulation, then move the Fears of all good Men; for to contribute their Power and Interest towards the Reforming a Nation, is a greater Service then to hazard their Lives in its Defence: for they that do this, can save it only from the Cruelties of Men, while the other so far as they succeed in their pious Attempts, rescue it from the Malice of Devils, and by a Conquest over those most formidable Enemies, preserve it from eternal Destruction. These Considerations I hope are of weight with you; and I desire it may be remember'd as a farther Motive to you, that the Power of those two Orders of Men I before spake to, lies especially in you: Magistrates are chosen from among you, and depend greatly on your Assistance in doing their Duty; and indeed without it there is but little comparatively can be expected from them. Ministers besides the relation they ordinarily have to your Families, have, very many of them, their Preferments from you: and all of them do much want your Help and Encouragement in order to
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the Success of their Labours: I beseech you therefore to consider the Power God has given you, not only among yourselves, but all other Orders of Men in the Kingdom, Magistrates, Ministers, and the common People; and to use it zealously in the Cause of God and his Church, and you need not doubt of that Success which the Lord delights to give unto such holy Endeavours. This would make us happy at Home, and victorious Abroad, and secure very great Blessings to yourselves and your Posterity.

2. I would say something also to all Persons in the general, and desire you that every one would do his part towards the exalting of the Nation, by repenting of your Sins, and doing Righteousness. It is our Country I am pleading for, that dear Concern to which we owe a thousand times more regard than to our own Lives; these we should willingly offer up, when the necessity of our Country requires it; and shall we grudge to part with our Sins for it? Shall we not embrace true Religion, when it appears to be so necessary to save the Kingdom? and when the Goodness of God does so much oblige us to it? It is on this Condition that Victory over Enemies, as well as other Blessings are promis'd; and therefore without it we cannot expect God should continue them to us, for, tho' he was pleas'd to turn our Captivity, and has hitherto prevented us with his Goodness, he can as easily turn our Victories, and with one breath of his Displeasure blast all that Prosperity he has lately restor'd to us; and I know nothing but a Reformation amongst us that can prevent it. It puzzles many serious and considering Men to see so many strange Acts of Providence for the delivering and setting a Nation, which they fear'd had fill'd up all the measures of their Sins, and were therefore fitted for an unavoidable Destruction: But if all these great Effects of God's Goodness, which we have lately receiv'd, added to the former, will not bring us to Repentance; as our Destruction when it comes will be the greater on the account of them, so we cannot reasonably expect it should be long defer'd. And indeed if we do not seriously apply ourselves now to the great Duties of Religion, what a Re-

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proach will it be to us that we have always with so much Heat contended for a Form of Godliness? Inasmuch that I dare affirm, if half that Zeal had been spent for Religion itself, as has been for the little Appendages of it, or at the most, for the outside of a Church; we had been, long e're now, the best and happiest Nation in the World. It is time therefore that we correct our former Mistakes, and set ourselves to the practice of that pure and undefiled Religion we profess, that we may contribute what lies in us to the Safety and Prosperity of the Kingdom. And at this time it becomes all good Men to deny themselves more then ordinarily, out of a generous Sympathy to our Fleets and Armies abroad. It was a brave and noble Resolution of *Uriah*, when *David* had sent for him from the Army, that he would not take the Comforts of his own House, but chose rather to lie at the King's Gate, while the Ark, and *Israel*, and *Judab* abode in Tents, and his Lord *Joab* and the Servants of the King were encamp'd in the open Fields: And are not our *Israel* and *Judab*, some of them in Tents too, and others floating upon the Ocean? And besides them several brave Armies of the Confederates? And have we not many *Joabs* (great and worthy Commanders) encamp'd in the Field? and which is more, is not our *David* also with them? And have we not something in danger there that is greater then the Ark? For our Religion is very much bound up in the Safety of our Prince and his Armies? It becomes us therefore to have a real sense of these things, and exercise that Self-denial and Devotion which will best express it, and will also prevail with God for the Continuance and Increase of Publick Blessings to us.

3. I shall say something very briefly concerning the Business of the present Time in this Place, wherein some (it may be) of all Orders of Men here are concern'd; and put you in mind of the Righteousness that is necessary for you to exercise in it. And as to those who are Plaintiffs, I would have them consider it does not become Christians to go to Law for small matters: *Why do ye not rather take wrong?* (says the Apostle,) *why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* 1 Cor. 6. 7. Neither

ther should they for greater matters, if the Difference may be well determin'd without it: And when the Difficulty of the Case requires it, the contending Parties are bound to preserve Charity towards one another notwithstanding, and each of them should desire that Justice may be done rather than he should gain the Cause: For Justice is God's, and therefore to be prefer'd before our own Interest. And as to Witnesses, I advise them, by all means, to keep a good Conscience, and neither for Love or Hatred, for the hopes of Gain, or fear of any Man's Displeasure, to depart from the Truth: *For lying lips are abomination to the Lord*, Prov. 12. 22. And Lies in this case are dreadful Perjuries, which contain in them so many horrid Sins against God and our Neighbours, that a Man must be extremely hardened in Wickedness, before he can deliberately forswear himself. For in this kind of Perjury there is a most impudent Profanation of the Name of God, a Violation of the Truth, a perverting of Justice, a Treachery to the King and the Laws, a bold Affront to the whole Court, that are deceiv'd and misguided by it, and an Abuse to the Country: Besides, if a Neighbour's good Name be expos'd by it, it is a base Slander; if his Goods, it is Theft; if his Life, it is Murder. Therefore it is no wonder God has threaten'd, *That a false Witness shall not be unpunish'd, and he that speaketh lies shall perish*, Prov. 19. 9. *And that the curse of God shall enter into the House of him that sweareth falsely*, Zach. 5. 4. And as to Pleadors, I desire they would always (as I hope many do) have a greater Respect to Truth and Justice, than to any private Advantages: and tho' it be their Duty to defend a good Cause, and I think none will blame them to make the best of one that is doubtful, yet their Business in both these Cases must be ever managed with that Decency and Gravity which becomes their Profession, and with that Fairness to Witnesses which the Law of Justice does require. But when a Cause appears to be bad, to plead this is to be an Advocate against Truth and Justice, and consequently against God himself. And then what can be expected by such Men, *but the Effects of that Threatning*, Is. 5. 20, 23. *Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil*

vil--- Which justifie the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him. And I hope they will believe the wise Man when he tells us, He that justifies the wicked; and he that condemns the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord. Prov. 17. 15. In a word, let those that are to be Jurors consider what shall be before them with all Sincerity, and determine according to their Consciences upon good Deliberation, and not suffer themselves to be bias'd by any Consideration whatsoever. And let them, with all others that have any Business in Courts of Judicature, remember always that excellent Rule of Justice deliver'd by our Blessed Saviour, Mat. 7. 12. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

And now (my Lords) my Discourse would turn to you, if I had not said so much already to Magistrates in general, of which, notwithstanding, I believe your Lordships needed very little, or nothing, either to put you in mind of your great Duty, or to quicken you in it. And I think both myself and others have great reason to bless God, that he has graciously restor'd to us Judges as at the first, and Counsellors as at the beginning, from whom we may expect an Execution of our Laws, according to the true Intention of them: and by whose means we hope Judgment will run every-where amongst us as the Waters, and Righteousness as a mighty stream of Water, and refresh all the Corners of the Land. And as I question not but your Lordships will use that Power and Interest you have to promote Righteousness in general; so I do again desire all Orders of Men here (as my last Request to them) to do their parts also towards it; remembering, that the same Righteousness which exalts a Nation will at length exalt us also to the Kingdom of Heaven, where for all the Service we do, and the Self-denial and Sufferings we endure in the Cause of God and his Church here, we shall receive a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.

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